

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for promoting products with a central server over a computer network comprises:
 - receiving a specification of a promotion for a product from a first computer,
 - creating an electronic incentive in response to the specification;
 - transferring the electronic incentive to an application server across the computer network, the application server coupled to a merchant server;
 - receiving usage data of the electronic incentive from the application server, the usage data determined in response to a promotion usage condition indicated by the merchant server; and
 - generating a report in response to the usage data;
- wherein data associated with the electronic incentive is transferred from the application server to the merchant server;
- wherein the merchant server specifies rendering of the data associated with the electronic incentive; and
- wherein the promotion usage condition is indicated in the merchant server when a user coupled thereto fulfills requirements of the electronic incentive.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic incentive comprises an offer selected from the group: cents off, percent discount, price point, buy X get Y free, solution selling, promotion content.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic incentive comprises a delivery method selected from the group: non-targeted, targeted category, targeted usage, targeted brand, targeted market.
4. The method of claim 3 wherein the electronic incentive comprises a tracking code.
5. The method of claim 3 wherein the electronic incentive comprises calendar data selected from the group: effective data, expiration date.
6. The method of claim 3 wherein the electronic incentive comprises a network computer address.
7. The method of claim 4 wherein the usage data from the application server comprises data selected from the group: demographic data of the user, a geographic indicator of the user, a number of products purchased by the user, currency value of products purchased by the user, a list of products purchased by the user, the tracking code.

1 8. A method for a merchant server coupled to a client system comprises:
2 requesting promotions from an application server coupled to the merchant
3 server;
4 receiving a description of a promotion from the application server, the
5 description including pre-conditions and a user benefit;
6 determining an output representation of the promotion in response to the
7 description of the promotion; thereafter
8 transmitting the output representation of the description to a client system for
9 display to a user;
10 receiving a selection of at least one item from the client system;
11 transmitting the selection of the at least one item to the application server;
12 when the application server determines that the selection of the at least one
13 item fulfills the pre-conditions, receiving an indication that the user is provided with the user
14 benefit from the application server; and thereafter
15 storing in a log a record that the user is provided with the user benefit.

1 9. The method of claim 8 wherein the user benefit is selected from the
2 class: cents off, percent discount, price point, buy X get Y free, solution selling, promotion
3 content.

1 10. The method of claim 8 wherein receiving the description of the
2 promotion comprises receiving the description when the user meets target criteria, the target
3 criteria being selected from the class: targeted user, targeted user demographic, targeted user
4 usage, targeted user brand, targeted user market.

1 11. The method of claim 8 wherein the pre-conditions are selected from
2 the class: purchase of an item, purchase of a quantity of an item, purchase of at least two
3 different items.

1 12. The method of claim 8 wherein requesting promotions from the
2 application server comprises:
3 determining a category of items for display for the client system; and
4 requesting promotions from the application server in response to the category
5 of items.

1 13. The method of claim 8 further comprising transmitting a plurality of
2 items to the client system for display;
3 wherein requesting promotions from the application server comprises
4 requesting promotions from the application server in response to the plurality of items.

1 14. The method of claim 8 further comprising receiving a selection of a
2 trigger item from the client system; and
3 wherein requesting promotions from the application server comprises
4 requesting promotions from the application server in response to the trigger item.

1 15. A method for an application server comprises:
2 receiving an electronic incentive from a central server, the electronic incentive
3 including a pre-condition and a benefit;
4 receiving a request from a merchant server for electronic incentives;
5 providing a description of the electronic incentive to the merchant server in
6 response to the request, the description including a description of the pre-condition and the
7 benefit;
8 receiving from the merchant server a selection by a user of at least one item;
9 determining whether the selection of the one item fulfills the pre-condition;
10 when the selection of the one item fulfills the pre-condition, providing the
11 merchant server with the benefit; and
12 when the selection of the one item fulfills the pre-condition, recording that the
13 electronic incentive has been used.

1 16. The method of claim 15 wherein the request from the merchant server
2 also includes a description of a shopping category of a user.

1 17. The method of claim 15 wherein the request from the merchant server
2 also includes an indicator of items previously selected by the user or currently displayed to
3 the user.

1 18. The method of claim 15 wherein the pre-condition comprises purchase
2 of the one item.

1 19. The method of claim 15 wherein the request from the merchant server
2 also includes an identifier of the user.

1 20. The method of claim 15 further comprising forwarding the recording
2 that the electronic incentive has been used to a centralized server.

1 21. The method of claim 15 wherein the application server and the
2 merchant server are co-located.